Srimathe Ramanujaya namah

Quartet (Chatusloki)

Supremacy of Sri

Beloved spouse of You
The purest male to woo
Bed and seat softly made
By snake king, His aid (1-1)

Script bodied eagle
Serves as seat and vehicle
Obsessive primordial matter
Is veil and illusion filter (1-2)

Brahma, Siva and others
Their wives also adores
Proud to be Your servant
And maid with fervent (1-3)

Your name itself is Sree
With traits superbly glee
So celebrated You are
How can I praise thee? (1-4)

Praising Sri's attributes

Amazing, infinitely vibrant
Naturally kind and eminent
Virtues of Yours inherently
Suits His liking, apparently (2-1)

Master, Your loving consort
Have traits hard to enumerate
He can't appraise Yours truly
Just like His own fame fully (2-2)

Sole Goddess of all domains
Wife of the supreme who reigns
You are a never drying ocean
Filled with great compassion (2-3)

I have done the surrender
Slave, I grasp Your splendor
Mercy of Yours, I now realize
With no fear, I start to praise (2-4)

Praising Sri's blessings

One time, the three universe
Ruined and went in accurse
When Your divine blessing
Distinctly, there it was missing (3-1)

Tiny elixir of mercy showers
Showed Your magical powers
Now, they are greatly restored
Aptly supported and adored (3-2)

Humans aspire affluence
Love self soul in preference
Eager on the happy sky above
Are rewards they aim with love (3-3)

Sweet to lotus eyed Lord
All the above, You bestow
Without the mercy You show
Nothing can prosper, though (3-4)

Praising Sri's forms

Tranquil, blissful and serene
Permeates in all, still unseen
Spanned with splendid stature
Is supreme Hari's innate nature (4-1)

If a form larger, ever exist
To Lord, loveable and brilliant
Apparent to eyes, that supreme
Is astonishing at the extreme (4-2)

Lord who likes to play forever
Everything His way, however
To help devotees access Him easy
The unborn takes form of many (4-3)

To You, all of the Lord's form
Scripts say, amicably conform
And are embraced and gifted
Inseparably lusted and exalted (4-4)

Commentary

Introduction

Quartet (known as Chatusloki or kantha stothram) is composed by Swami Alavandar (original name - Yamunacharia). Chathusloki is the first stothra to eulogize independently and exclusively on Goddess Maha Lakshmi, in our Acharya lineage (parampara). Several acharyas followed Alavanadar's footsteps - like Kuresa (Kurathazwar) wrote Sristavam and Swami Desikan sung Sristuti.

Though contains only four short stanzas, this hymn is loaded with elusive and complex philosophies and meanings. It is considered to be one of the most difficult hymns to interpret the true intended meaning of the author. Swami Desikan has written a commentary (Chathusloki bashyam) in Sanskrit and so as Periya Aachan Pillai, and his son Nayannar aachan pillai.

One of the major differences of opinion lies in the interpretation of the powers of Sri. Whether she is spanned everywhere (vibuthvam) and partakes in creation, operation and destruction of the world (jagath kaaranam) and also whether She has the capability to sanction salvation (moksham). Song and commentary here both are refraining from those complex and ambiguous situations.

1-1 Swami Alavandar starts this stotra on Goddess Maha Lakshmi with the word "Thay Kantha" means "Your Beloved". Your loving husband is the most honest (Pursha utthaman) and noblest male of all. For Him, His first servant (Adi seshan) forms a bed to lie down and also a seat to sit on him.

1-2 G Scripts (Vedas) claim that God's eagle's (Garuda, Pakshi raja) body is made of scripts (svarnoose garthumaan). That Garuda, serves as a couch for Lord to sit and also as a vehicle for the Lord. Primordial matter (Prakrit) [from which all nonsentient things are created] forms a translucent screen for you. Goddess can look through it. But not the ordinary people (chith) from outside can look inside. It is an illusionary screen (Maya).

1-3 All other deities like Brahma, Siva, Indra and other angels (devas) along with their wives are very pleased to be Your servants and maids. And they do all the service (Kaimkaryam) with enthusiasm.

1-4 Your name itself Sri. It means wealth (aiswaryam), prosperity (subiksham), auspicious (mangalam). You have been revered in all scripts (Vedas, upanishads, pancharatra sasatra). I am at the lowest level in knowledge or abilities. As such, how can I embark on praising You?

2-1 Sri, Your virtues are unlimited (niravathim). They are eternal, blissful and are renowned. Traits like endless compassion and other magnificant qualities inherently (svatha) favors Lord Narayana's likings (abhimatha).

2-2 Bounds of Your fame can't be measured. The Lord for the entire universe and Your loving husband, may be omnipotent and omniscient. But, he himself doesn't know such limits of Your great qualities, just like he doesn't even know the extent of His own attributes.

2-3 Sri, You are the sole Goddess of the universe (Loka eka Iswari) and You are the loving spouse of the Lord of all the worlds (Loga natha). Your great virtue called kindness, compassion is an ocean which never dries up (dhanthe).

2-4 Sri, You are the repository for virtues. Such celebrated You, I, a slave for You, longing for the service, who has done the total surrender, who understands Your mercy start my prayer without any fear.

3-1 Once all the three worlds (seven world cluster above, earth and seven world cluster below) went into darkness and destruction when they didn't receive even a ray of Your blessing.

3-2 Your mercy is like a cloud pouring down on everything below. It's like a panacea, elixir, drink of the angels (Amritha). When a drop of that hit this world, everything started to turn into prosperity. And now the worlds are appropriately supported.

3-3 Human desire (Bhakthas) is threefold. First one is Wealth (Aiswaryam), second is enjoyment of their own soul (kaivalyam) and the last is attaining salvation (moksham). [This has been quoted in several places including Bhagavath Geetha.] They aim to achieve only one of the things at any time.

3-4 Sri, You are the sweetheart to Lotus eyed (pundarika nayana) Lord. Your compassion is the grounds for the propserity of any item on earth. Without those, I don't even dare to think what will happen.

4-1 Lord takes many forms for only one purpose. He wants to make Himself easily accessible to His devotees. His form at heaven (param, Srivaikuntam) is very calm, peaceful and relaxing. It is filled with eternal happiness. That form also pervades in every single atom in the universe. The entire universe as such, is His body. Such a magnificent nature is of that Lord Hari's. (Hari is one of the several names for Lord. It means "the one who steals all of our sins".)

4-2 Is there any form that can be said better than the above? Yes. It is that form which is brilliant to look at it. It will be obvious to naked eyes. It is that form which is amazingly great. It is the idol, divine personality form (archavathara – divya mangala vigraha). Note Acharya here shows idol form is far superior to any other form.

4-3 Lord loves His divine activities (leelas). In fact, the universe, the people, birth and death, good deeds and sins are all like a drama for God. Since He is the ultimate authority (svathanthriyan), the rules of the games are defined by Him. But the purpose is only one. That is to help, protect and support His devotees. Here, Alavandar refers to incarnation forms (Vibhavam).

4-4 When concluding it is referred to all other forms. This is a catch-all phrase. Anything left out in the above list is indirectly referred here. Like emanation (vyuham) and intrinsic (antharyami) were not quoted directly. Scripts claim that all those Lord's forms suits nicely to Yours. They are divine and extremely special and are embraced by You.